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INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

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SUBJECT: GAMBIAN ELECTION FALLOUT: ADMIRATION TURNS TO
ACCUSATION

11. (U) SUMMARY: A WAVE OF CRITICISM HAS REPLACED THE
POSITIVE COMMENTARY HEARD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE OCTOBER
18 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THE UPC COALITION AND HUMAN
RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ALLEGE WIDESPREAD HARASSMENT AND
UNREASONABLE ARRESTS SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE
OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS AND CALL ELECTION AUTHORITIES
INEFFICIENT AND CORRUPT. OTHER OPPOSITION PARTY
MEMBERS HAVE NOT BEEN TARGETED AS OF YET. END SUMMARY.

UPC COALITION ACCUSES APRC OF HARASSMENT

12. (U) WIDESPREAD AND FAIRLY CREDIBLE REPORTS INDICATE
THAT UPC SUPPORTERS AND THEIR HOMES HAVE BEEN ATTACKED
SINCE THE FINAL ELECTION RESULTS WERE ANNOUNCED FRIDAY.
UNIFORMED POLICE AND ARMY HAVE ALLEGEDLY ARRESTED OVER
SIXTY KNOWN OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS AND TAKEN THEM TO
POLICE STATIONS OR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
(NIA) HEADQUARTERS. IN ADDITION, CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF
THE APRC, ALSO RUMORED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE RATHER MORE
SINISTER JULY 22 MOVEMENT, HAVE REPORTEDLY ASSAULTED
OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS.

13. (U) SPECIFICALLY, UPC OFFICIALS ANNOUNCED THAT APRC
MILITANTS ATTACKED THE HOMES OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:
UDP ORGANIZING SECRETARY LAMIN WAA JUWARA, UDP
COALITION CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR FOR WESTERN DIVISION
ALHAJI DEMBO JATTA, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBER DEMBO
BOJANG, AND OMAR JALLOW (OJ).

14. (U) WELL-KNOWN DETAINEES INCLUDE DR. MOMODOU LAMIN
MANNEH, AN OPPOSITION SUPPORTER WHO RETURNED TO THE
GAMBIA TO CAMPAIGN AFTER BEING GRANTED ASYLUM IN THE
U.S., CITIZEN FM RADIO DIRECTOR GEORGE CHRISTENSEN AND
MUHAMMED LAMIN SILLAH, COORDINATOR OF THE COALITION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL'S GAMBIA CHAPTER. THE THIRTEEN-YEAR OLD
BROTHER OF ONE OF POST'S SECURITY LES STAFF WAS ALSO
TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AT THE NIA DURING THE POLITICAL
CLASHES IN TALLINDING ON OCTOBER 16. AS OF OCTOBER 24,
HE HAD NOT BEEN RELEASED AND HIS FAMILY HAD NOT BEEN
ALLOWED TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIM. POST WILL TRANSMIT AN
ADDITIONAL LIST OF DETAINEE NAMES SEPTEL.

15. (U) ACCORDING TO UDP COALITION PARTY LEADERS, THEY
HAVE COMPLAINED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE
INTERIOR, THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, AND APRC
PARTY LEADERS, TO NO AVAIL. THEY WOULD LIKE THE
GOVERNMENT OR THE APRC TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON
RADIO OR TELEVISION CONDEMNING HARASSMENT OF OPPOSITION
SUPPORTERS AND DIRECTING ALL APRC 'MILITANTS' TO
EXERCISE RESTRAINT UNDER THREAT OF PUNISHMENT. THE
COALITION PARTY LEADERS STATE THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO
RESPONSE TO THEIR REQUEST.

16. (U) COALITION LEADERS REPORT THAT THEIR MEMBERS ARE
GETTING RESTLESS AND FRUSTRATED, AND WITHOUT ACTION
FROM THE APRC OR GOVERNMENT, COALITION LEADERS CANNOT
GUARANTEE THEIR SUPPORTERS' CONTINUED CALM. MORE
OMINOUSLY, ONE COALITION REPRESENTATIVE SAID, "IF THE
GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES CANNOT PROTECT US, WE WILL
DEFEND OURSELVES."

UDP COALITION CRITICIZES IEC ELECTION MANAGEMENT

¶17. (U) THE UDP COALITION HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, TO PUBLICIZE ITS ACCUSATIONS OF APRC HARASSMENT, AND USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICIZE SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE ELECTION PROCESS, FROM REGISTRATION ONWARD. ONE REPORTER ASKED THE REASONABLE QUESTION, "IF YOU OBJECTED TO HOW THE ELECTION WAS RUN, WHY DID YOU RUSH TO CONGRATULATE THE PRESIDENT AND ACCEPT THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION BEFORE ALL OF THE COUNTS WERE EVEN REPORTED?" THE RESPONSE WAS A) "THE GAMBIA IS LARGER THAN OUSAINOU DARBOE OR THE UDP," AND DARBOE NEEDED TO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP AND ACCEPT THE RESULTS TO ENSURE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY AFTER THE ELECTIONS; AND B) THE COALITION BECAME AWARE OF MANY OF THE ALLEGED ELECTION IRREGULARITIES ONLY IN THE DAYS AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

¶18. (U) COMMENT: THE POINT THAT DARBOE HAD TO ACCEPT THE ELECTION RESULTS TO MAINTAIN PEACE IN THE GAMBIA IS WELL-TAKEN; COALITION SUPPORTERS WERE ON-RECORD DECLARING THAT THEY WOULD 'FIGHT IN THE STREETS' IF THEIR CANDIDATE DID NOT WIN. HOWEVER, IF THE COALITION IS AS RESTLESS AND FRUSTRATED AS THEIR LEADERS INDICATE, PUBLICLY LAMBASTING THE GOVERNMENT, THE APRC AND ELECTION AUTHORITIES IS AS DANGEROUS AND INFLAMMATORY NOW AS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ON ELECTION DAY. END COMMENT.

¶19. (U) THE COALITION'S STATEMENT AND PRESS RELEASE RE-VISITED THE CONTROVERSIAL PROBLEM OF VOTERS WHO HAD VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS BUT WERE NOT LISTED ON THE COMPUTER PRINTOUT OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION LIST. DARBOE LEVELED THE ACCUSATION THAT THE FINAL DECISION TO ALLOW SUCH VOTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION WAS MADE BY INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION (IEC) CHAIR GABRIEL ROBERTS AT THE BEHEST OF THE APRC AND WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE REST OF THE IEC. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THE VOTING PUBLIC HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT TO ANY NAME ON THE VOTER REGISTRATION LIST THAT WAS PUBLISHED BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, THEY DID NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT TO THE PEOPLE WHOSE NAMES WERE ADDED WHEN THEY WERE ALLOWED TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY. DARBOE CHARGED THAT THE POLICY THUS DENIED THE VOTING PUBLIC ONE OF THE RIGHTS GUARANTEED UNDER THE ELECTION CODE OF CONDUCT.

¶110. (U) IEC OFFICIAL SAID YUSUPH ADMITTED AT THE OPPOSITION PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE ENTIRE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS WAS CARRIED OUT HURRIEDLY IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME, LEAVING SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY FOR ERROR. MR. YUSUPH EXPLAINED THAT 'YOUNG LADIES, FRESH FROM SCHOOL, WHO MAYBE DID NOT APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT THEY WERE DOING', ENTERED THE VOTER REGISTRATION DATA INTO THE COMPUTER. ACCORDING TO MR. YUSUPH, ALTHOUGH THE IEC FOUND ERRORS IN THE DATABASE, THEY DECIDED IT WOULD NOT BE FAIR TO DISENFRANCHISE VOTERS WHO HAD LEGITIMATELY COMPLETED THE REGISTRATION PROCESS ON THE BASIS OF DATA ENTRY ERRORS.

¶111. (U) DARBOE FURTHER ALLEGED THAT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WAS CORRUPTED FROM THE BEGINNING BY THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS. HE STATED THAT MANY NON-GAMBIANS HAD OBTAINED NATIONAL ID CARDS AND USED THEM TO REGISTER TO VOTE, AND THAT REGISTRATION HAD OCCURRED IN SECRET OUTSIDE OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION PERIOD AT UNOFFICIAL PREMISES. HE THEN PRODUCED THE SENEGALESE NATIONAL ID CARD AND GAMBIAN VOTER REGISTRATION CARD OF A MAN NAMED EBOU COLI, AND SAID IT WAS BUT ONE EXAMPLE OF MANY. HE CLAIMED THE IEC HAD NOT ACTED TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM, EVEN THOUGH THE OPPOSITION ALERTED THE IEC TO THE CASE OF EBOU COLI AND MANY OTHERS BEFORE THE ELECTION.

¶112. (U) COMMENT: WHILE SOME IMPERFECTIONS, IRREGULARITIES, AND EVEN INTENTIONAL MANIPULATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WERE INEVITABLE, THE NEWS OF ASSAULTS AND ARRESTS IS ALARMING. THE APRC HAS WON THE ELECTIONS, AND PRESUMABLY HAS NO MORE NEED TO INTIMIDATE COALITION SUPPORTERS. THE TARGETING OF THE

UDP COALITION AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS FOR THESE ASSAULTS AND ARRESTS UNDERLINES THE RETALIATORY NATURE OF THE APRC/GOVERNMENT ACTIONS. THIS UNABASHED AND (SO FAR) UNCHECKED ABUSE OF POWER HINTS AT THE SENSE OF IMPUNITY FELT BY LOYALISTS UNDER THE APRC UMBRELLA. END COMMENT.

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